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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE  
SWEARING-IN CEREMONY FOR  
ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER  
AS

DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
LANGLEY, VIRGINIA

2:38 P.M. EST

A long time ago at the Naval Academy, I shared the responsibility of being a Midshipman with Stan Turner. I didn't know him personally; rather, I knew him but he didn't know me. (Laughter) He was the leader of our class. He was superlative in everything he did -- in athletics and military bearing and leadership capabilities and academics. He was a source of so much admiration among his classmates that there was not a competitive feeling nor was there one of jealousy. He was superb.

Later, he tried for a Rhodes Scholarship. So did I. He was selected by the committee; I was not. (Laughter) I might say, the committee made the right decision. (Laughter)

Not too long ago I was faced with the responsibility of choosing a new Director for a community that has been investigated and perhaps damaged by revelation of past mistakes, a community that inherently is divided but which shares a common responsibility and a common purpose, a community that must face the most difficult possible conflicts between openness and frankness and public scrutiny inherent in the principles of a democracy, with the mandatory requirements for confidentiality in the collection of crucial intelligence information in relationship with our allies and friends throughout the world.

I was faced with the responsibility of choosing someone who could deal with these complications. And when I decided to ask Stan Turner to be the Director of Central Intelligence, I did it with a sense of relief, a sense of sure judgment and a sense of confidence.

I believe that in the coming months there can be some basic and necessary changes, most of which have been pointed out to me by the highly professional men and women who serve in the Intelligence Community in the most enlightened and proper and dedicated way. There must be a closer relationship between the customers, like the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State and the Congress, who receive analyses of intelligence information on the one hand, and those who search out the details in thousands of places around the globe, to put together advice on which the very existence of our country must depend.

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So, I would like to see in the future the establishment of priorities and tasks to be described much more clearly to the customers, those of us who must have accurate information and the right kind of information.

I will do all I can, working with past Directors who are here and the Secretary of Defense, who is here, and the Attorney General, who is here, and other leaders who are here, to let the American people have an accurate assessment, and the deepest possible commitment that every action of the Intelligence Community now and in the future will be legal and proper.

I have just met with some of the leaders of all of the seven or eight or nine agencies that are involved in this collective effort. I have told them that as President I know that I am going to make mistakes. I know that within the broad and sprawling and sometimes confused entity that must be an Intelligence Community, that mistakes are going to be made. But when they are made, when any impropriety or illegality does occur, I want to know about it immediately because a concealment of a mistake and a subsequent revelation will be a devastating additional blow that is not necessary to the esteem and integrity that all of you so richly deserve.

I have got a lot to learn as a new President, and we must reassess constantly the kind of information that is derived and how it is presented to me, and the proper placement of priorities and the assignment of personnel and financial effort in different parts of the world.

There must be a constant and a clear delineation of responsibility between the FBI and the intelligence agencies so that we can do what is legal again. We must narrowly define which people need to know sensitive information so that we can let those who need information have it, but not overly spread potentially damaging information, if revealed, among those who might reveal it inadvertently.

We also must decide how to distinguish between useful information to a recipient and the techniques or sources of that information which a recipient does not need, but which, if revealed, might sever the friendship between ourselves and other nations or cause danger or loss of life to those who are helping to serve us in the collection of information.

This is such an extremely complicated effort, that I have been impressed with the need for superb leadership. I have no doubt that Admiral Stansfield Turner can provide that leadership.

He needs your help and he needs my help, and those with whom he works need the support and confidence of the American people. His own integrity is the surest guarantee that no future abuses will embarrass us.

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I know that all of you share with me the deepest appreciation to him for being willing to undertake this enormous task. And I think the good groundwork that has been laid by Dr. Jim Schlesinger and by George Bush, who are in front of me, and other leaders, will be a rich opportunity for him to make even better progress in the future.

So, to all those men and women who have served in the past and who serve now, to help protect our Nation's security, I say thank you.

And to Stan Turner, who will be your leader and my closest possible associate in the future, I say again, thank you.

I am part of your effort and you are part of mine. To the extent that we can share this partnership, we can carve out for our Nation and perhaps even the world, a clearer sense of what peace might be and a more sure realization of that peace which is the goal of us all.

Thank you very much for letting me participate in this fine ceremony.

END (AT 2:48 P.M. EST)